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Jobs Peak expansion raises questions

by **Susie Vasquez**

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The addition of 26 lots to Jobs Peak Ranch, a high-end residential neighborhood just east of Foothill Road, has raised concerns over possible groundwater contamination, an issue magnified by the permeability of soils in and around Jobs Peak.

The project, which will be considered by Douglas County commissioners Thursday, ran up against a hurdle when its application was submitted to the Nevada Department of Environmental Protection.

"We denied the application for a major modification at Jobs Peak Ranch because the residential density is too high and depth of the groundwater is too shallow," said Cindy Petterson, spokeswoman for the Nevada Department of Environmental Protection. "Right now, the development would be required to put in either a sewer system or denitrification systems, but some type of legal entity must oversee their operation."

Designed to remove the nitrates that can leach into the ground and contaminate groundwater, denitrification systems are used and have been effective in the established homes, according to Jobs Peak developer Cole Smith.

The tanks are monitored annually and each tank was approved by the State Health Department before a permit is issued. Each homeowner has a contract with an outside engineering company for maintenance, he said.

"In 1996 when this project was approved by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, denitrification systems weren't required by the county or the state," he said. "We mandated denitrification tanks because of their environmental qualities. It wasn't something we were mandated to do because we're developers."

He said each tank has an alarm system inside the home and if it fails, the alarm goes off, warning the resident.

"These systems work beautifully," he said.

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Located just west of Foothill Road south of Centerville Lane, the high-end residential development was approved for 122 lots on 1,080 acres. The minimum lot size is set at two acres.

The addition brings the total number of lots to 148.

Margaret Pross, who lives on Diorite Road just east of Jobs Peak, said the rules governing these systems don't require the homeowner's association to report their findings to either the county or the Nevada State Health Division.

"As a result, these systems are not being monitored as was originally intended by the Nevada State Health Division and our groundwater is at risk," she said.

Douglas County Manager Dan Holler said Environmental Protection determines how many septs can be located on the property and the county requires developers to comply with state standards.

"We don't have anyone on staff qualified to do the inspections and we don't regulate denitrification systems at the county level. That's a state requirement," he said.

Douglas County has considered a mandate for denitrification systems, but if those systems fail the county would be obligated to kick people out of their homes, Holler said.

"It's simply not an enforcement issue we've undertaken," he said.

The Douglas County Planning Commission is recommending approval of the additional lots. Conditions of approval include creating a conservation easement or open space that will prohibit further development.

In other business:

-- Commissioners could approve \$1.5 million in general obligation water bonds for improvements to the Sheridan Acres Water System on the west side of the Carson Valley.

-- Commissioners could approve a new sidewalk ordinance for Gardnerville Residents. Homeowners whose property abuts a sidewalk will be responsible for snow and ice removal, as well as removal of any grass and shrubs encroaching on sidewalks, the ordinance states.

-- Susie Vasquez can be reached at svasquez@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 211.

What: Douglas County Board of Commissioners meeting

When: Noon Thursday

Where: Courtroom of the Douglas County Administration building, 1616 Eighth St., Minden

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